

Best Practices of Public-Private Partnerships on Education and Skills Training in the Caribbean*

by

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1 Introduction

The countries of the Caribbean region are facing significant economic development challenges occasioned by the process of global change. With a greater integration of markets and the liberalization of trade, the English-speaking countries of the region have been forced to be more competitive in external markets and also to identify new industries/sectors to replace sunset industries such as sugar and bananas. Caribbean countries have sought to develop the services sector - tourism, financial, professional and cultural - as an alternative to the declining agricultural sector. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, energy-based industries have formed the backbone to economic growth and development. The countries have agreed to strengthen the economic integration process by establishing a Caribbean Community Single Market and Economy (CSME). The Single Market component of the CSME was implemented in January 2006. The CSME which involves the free movement of capital, labour, goods and services and the harmonization of economic policies, would provide the basis for achieving economies of scale and scope in the production of goods and services, greater access to factors of production and also a training ground for exporting goods and services to the rest of the world.

The process of repositioning and developing the new Caribbean economy through the CSME would require creative planning and the generation of significant resources. Such an effort would necessitate the formation of various forms of public-private partnerships (PPPs). PPPs can be regarded as a “set of institutional relationships between the government and various actors in the private sector and civil society” [Mitchell-Weaver and Manning, 1991-2, p. 48]. They represent an arrangement whereby representatives of the organised non-governmental sector are brought into the governmental decision making process. PPPs take on several forms: contracts or concessions for the provision of services usually provided by the government, joint ventures, various forms of build, own, operate, lease, transfer arrangements (for example, BOO, BOT, BOLT), public

financial support or incentives for the private provision of services and various types of informal cooperative arrangements between the government and the non-governmental sector (private business, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations).

The PPPs allow countries to expand the range of goods and services provided to citizens of the country, enhance the efficiency of the public sector and empower various groups in the society. PPPs allow entities within a country to mobilize resources (human, financial, capital, etc) to meet production goals.

In the context of education and training, it is recognized that this component of human resources development is critical to the repositioning and development process in the new Caribbean.

2 Education and Training in the Caribbean

Caribbean countries have paid particular attention to education and training as part of their national economic development strategies. A recent report on *A Caribbean Education Strategy* indicated that, on average, education expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product, is 4 percent compared with 3.3 percent for low- and middle-income countries and 5 percent in high-income countries [World Bank, n.d.]. The English-speaking countries of the region enjoy universal primary level (4-11 year olds) education in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals, while several countries including Barbados, Bahamas and St Kitts and Nevis have attained universal secondary level (11-16 year olds) education. The remaining countries have relatively high enrolment rates at secondary level. Although data are sparse on training expenditure, it seems that the Caribbean countries have put great emphasis on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to cater to the mid-level occupations in the labour market. Skills training programs can be found in all the countries [see McArdle, 2006a, b]. These programs are both institutional and enterprise-based.

At the tertiary level, enrolment is much lower than in other regions. It is estimated that the regional average is about 9 percent compared with a global average of 18 percent. The Caribbean region has however sought to expand enrolment and output of the tertiary level educational institutions by setting a goal of 15 percent of the age cohort.

Although the education and training component of human resource development has expanded in recent years, there are still major deficiencies in the system which have stymied the development process. Knowledge creation and skill development are vital to enhancing the productivity of workers and hence the overall socio-economic welfare of the region. Enhanced productivity is also critical in boosting the international competitiveness of goods and services, especially for countries with a fixed exchange rate regime.

Surveys of enterprises in the Caribbean region point to a shortage of skilled workers in critical areas of development [see CARICOM Secretariat, 2006, chapter XII]. Skill gaps exist in such areas as tourism, information technology, senior management, health and the energy sectors. Assessments of the training system in the region point to problems associated with the unavailability of adequate training, deficiencies in the quality of training, a poor linkage between training and skill needs, lack of information on skills needs in the labour market, lack of adequately trained teachers and the lack of coordination among different training programs.

The education system also suffers from such deficiencies as inadequate access especially at the secondary level, low school achievements especially among males, some degree of social and gender equity and poor transitional arrangements from the 'world of school' to the 'world of work'.

The inability to resolve these educational and training problems can constrain economic growth and adversely affect productivity and competitiveness. There is a need to re-orient/restructure the education and training system to reduce wastage, enhance the quality of graduates and provide a better fit with the 'world of work'. Such a

transformation requires the cooperation of agents in the public and private sectors and civil society. In the Caribbean, the government plays a major role in the provision of education. Indeed, the public educational system accounts for over 95 percent of the enrolment/output of the primary/secondary/tertiary institutions. Private educational institutions are the exception rather than the rule. Such an arrangement tends to limit partnership arrangements in the educational system to a minor supplementary role.

PPPs in the form of formal or informal cooperative arrangements are more evident in the area of training. This observation reflects the need for training institutions engaged in skills training to be in touch with the entities which absorb their graduates. In some cases, these types of PPPs have been successful in mobilizing resources and providing for the needs of the labour market.

3 Case Studies of PPPs in Education and Training

There have been various levels of cooperation between public, private and civil society sectors within the region which can be classified under PPPs. Some of the prominent or 'best practice' cases have been HEART Trust/NTA and JCVTE in Jamaica, BIMAP and Pinelands Creative Workshop in Barbados and the National Training Agency in Trinidad and Tobago.

3.1 HEART Trust/NTA

The Human Employment and Resource Training (HEART) Trust was established in Jamaica by an Act of Parliament in 1982 and reformed as a National Training Agency (NTA) in 1991. The original HEART Trust was established as 'a scheme for financing and implementing the training of persons with a view to employment'. The main functions of the Trust are to:

- (i). Develop, encourage, monitor and provide finance for training schemes for employment of trainees;
- (ii). Provide employment opportunities for trainees;
- (iii). Direct or assist in placement of persons seeking employment in Jamaica;

- (iv). Promote employment projects.

The financing of the HEART Trust/NTA programs is undertaken mainly through a 3 percent payroll levy on all employers above a given threshold. The Trust is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of representatives from the public and private sectors and civil society. The agency as a public entity reports to the Ministry of Education and coordinates technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Jamaica. Given the focus of the agency, it is imperative that a cooperative partnership with the private sector be forged as part of the design and delivery of TVET programs.

HEART/NTA has implemented several programs to enhance the skill development of the Jamaican labour force. These initiatives include:

- (i). a community-based training program catering to various communities throughout Jamaica;
- (ii). a certification system based on the British NVQ model;
- (iii). a new approach to standard development referred to as the 'unit competency standards' which are modular and flexible to employer needs;
- (iv). a 'new business model' to train and certify the Jamaican workforce to international standards, hence enhancing the productivity, competitiveness and welfare of persons;
- (v). training programs through academies, school leavers training opportunities programs, apprenticeship, vocational training centres and development institutes. These are both institutional and on-the-job training programs;
- (vi). a comprehensive technology plan to integrate ICT in the delivery of training;
- (vii). agreements with key export sectors - bauxite and hospitality - and with the Jamaica Employers Federation (JEF) and other private sector agencies.

The HEART Trust/NTA has been at the forefront of skills training in Jamaica. Its new business model which seeks to train and satisfy up to 100,000 persons annually by 2008 would greatly enhance the labour productivity of Jamaican workers and boost labour mobility and competitiveness. The cooperative effort of public and private sectors in the

agency's work indicates how a specific form of PPP can promote human resource development in the region.

3.2 Jamaica Collaborative for Universal Technology Education (JCUTE)

JCUTE was launched in February 2006 as a collaborative effort involving ICT4D Jamaica and the International Education Collaborative Foundation (IECF) based in the USA. Both entities are non-profit organizations with ICT4D focusing on fostering sustainable development and global competitiveness through research, modeling, advocacy and knowledge sharing of information communications technology (ICT), while IECF is an organization interested in developing PPPs which enable secondary school students to be technologically fluent and globally competitive.

The PPP initiative is supported by the Government, HEART Trust/NTA, as it fits into its strategic plan, NGOs and several major private sector companies in Jamaica which have provided funds for the project. This PPP is expected to intensify technological training and e-learning in the school system. ICT4D has pioneered the role of PPP in effecting change in the application of ICT in Jamaica.

The JCUTE is a new PPP initiative but it augurs well for the increased productivity of the Jamaican workforce which needs to adopt 'frontier skills' in order to compete in the highly competitive global environment.

3.3 BIMAP

The Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity (BIMAP) was opened in 1972 as a result of the collaboration between Government of Barbados and the private sector. Its mission is "to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of managerial, public and private and to increase national productivity". BIMAP has developed a capacity to undertake managerial work and supervisory training, consulting and research, business development and counseling. Over the years, it has expanded its programming to both short and long-term management training. Recent short-term training has included such areas as marketing and customer service, supervisory management and ICT. The long-term

program includes certificates, diplomas and degrees. In a strategic alliance with the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom (UK), BIMAP offers MBA and MSc programs in several areas of management. BIMAP currently trains over 3000 persons annually in these short and long-term programs.

Both the Board of Trustees and the Advisory Council of BIMAP consist of persons representing the public and private sectors and civil society (trade unions, professional groups). This arrangement allows the parties to the PPP to provide their inputs into the design and development of appropriate training and educational programs.

BIMAP has been involved in supporting training programs outside of Barbados. With the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat, BIMAP has been involved in a Regional Entrepreneurship Training Program aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Caribbean and thus improving their overall profitability.

3.4 Pinelands Creative Workshop (PCW)

The Pinelands Creative Workshop (PCW) in Barbados was established in 1978 as an outgrowth of a community-based organization, the Pinelands Development Council. The group's focus was originally on its cultural education program which was viewed as a means of changing the negative image of the community.

The objectives of the PCW have been to:

- (i). develop self-awareness and personal growth;
- (ii). promote a positive community image;
- (iii). educate and uplift their community and other communities in Barbados and the region;

The development of this community-based organization (CBO) has progressed as follows:

- (i). 1978 - 1986: development of group identity and direction with a focus on cultural production and sport;

- (ii). 1987 -1991: with greater recognition for cultural production, a more business-like approach to activities. Broader community governance structure;
- (iii). 1992 - 1995: physical consideration and expanded range of community activities;
- (iv). 1995 - present: establishment of partnerships with other stakeholders.

As a CBO, the PCW has collaborated with the Government of Barbados and other agencies (UNDP, UNESCO) to offer a wide range of community-based training programs. For example, it has established the Marcus Garvey Resource Centre as part of its effort to “build on long term partnerships which include public, private sector and community offering on-going opportunities”. The Centre offers skill building programs which would allow participants (primarily from the community) to function adequately in the ‘world of work’. Some programs are geared towards self-employment (entrepreneurship). Persons in these programs can access the Centre’s facilities and services as they overcome the initial challenges of enterprise development. The PCW has partnered with the Government of Barbados in providing enterprise and skills training as part of the Government’s Social Investment Fund.

3.5 National Training Agency

The National Training Agency (NTA) of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) was established in January 1999 under the aegis of the Ministry of Training and Distance Learning. The main goal of the NTA is to provide persons with the competencies required for the ‘world of work’ through a ‘comprehensive integrated training system’. It is required to coordinate TVET in T&T in order to effectively meet the needs of employers. The NTA collaborates with key stakeholders in the private sector in order to correct the mismatch between the needs of employers and the output of the education and training system. Some of these partners include the T&T Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the T&T Manufacturers’ Association and the Employers’ Consultative Association. These and other partners work with the NTA to determine training needs, develop and implement standards, promote investment in human resources development and promote TVET in T&T.

The NTA offers a wide range of services to their partners: standards setting, development of National Vocational Qualifications, accredit TVET providers, undertake labour market signaling and quality enhancement and audit support for TVET providers.

4 Lessons Learnt from Case Studies

The experience with PPPs in the education and training sector in the Caribbean indicates that the cooperative approach to PPPs has been adopted primarily in the training of the workforce. There are few examples of well-established PPPs in the education sector.

The main lessons learnt from the Caribbean experience are as follows:

- (i). PPPs must be goal-oriented with a stated mission. The planning of institutional arrangements is critical to success;
- (ii). PPPs must be flexible to the changing needs of the economic environment and the partners. They should be free from bureaucratic control as they seek to accommodate the interests of the partners;
- (iii). PPPs are particularly useful in delivering education and training services at the community level. Linkages with community-based organizations provide an adequate means to effectively and efficiently deliver education and training services;
- (iv). Partners in the PPP must be committed to the endeavour to ensure longevity. The cases identified in this paper have been in existence for long periods (HEART Trust/NTA, 1982; BIMAP, 1972 and PCW, 1987);
- (v). It is important that PPPs in the education and training sector be properly funded. In the case of HEART Trust/NTA in Jamaica, a levy was used to ensure financial sustainability;
- (vi). PPPs should explore strategic alliances with other external agencies in order to broaden the range of services available to the workforce.

These lessons indicate that PPP can be an important mechanism for extending the range of services provided by the education and training process. These mechanisms assist with the increase in factor productivity and competitiveness in the region. There is a

need for greater promotion of PPPs in education and training given the significant skills which exist in the Caribbean region.

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